

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 7, 2005**

## **SUPREME COURT FILLS TWO VACANCIES IN SEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT**

The Supreme Court of Illinois announced Tuesday appointments of two experienced attorneys to fill two upcoming judicial vacancies in the Seventh Judicial Circuit.

Eric Scott Pistorius of Jerseyville was appointed to fill the Circuit Court seat that will become vacant upon the retirement of Judge Thomas G. Russell on August 24. John William Belz of Springfield will fill the Circuit Court vacancy left by the pending retirement of Judge Donald M. Cadagin on July 8.

The appointments of Mr. Pistorius and Mr. Belz were recommended to the Supreme Court by Justice Rita B. Garman following a review process by a special citizen's screening committee. The committee unanimously recommended each of the candidates as exceptionally well qualified.

Mr. Pistorius, 46, who will sit as the resident Circuit judge in Jersey County, has been a lifelong resident of the county and has practiced law there for the past 18 years. He has experience as an assistant state's attorney, a part-time public defender and a private practitioner handling criminal defense, personal injury civil litigation and family law.

Mr. Pistorius received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Western Illinois University, and his *juris doctor* from Southern Illinois University in 1984. He practiced with a Granite City law firm, Bernard & Davidson, until 1986 when he became an assistant state's attorney in Jersey County. In 1988, he joined the Law Offices of George P. Wittman as an associate and has been in his own solo practice in Jerseyville since 1995.

He and his wife, Lisa Marie, have three grown children.

Mr. Belz, 40, will sit as a resident circuit judge in Sangamon County. For the past six years, he has been the First Assistant and Chief of the Felony Division of the Sangamon County State's Attorney's office, and prosecuted some of the most high profile criminal cases in the county in recent years. During his career, he also has served as part-time public defender, handling hundreds of serious felony cases, including murder, home invasion and armed robbery. He also has experience in arguing juvenile and criminal cases before the Illinois Appellate Court.

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Mr. Belz also is a member of the Capital Litigation Trial Bar, a group of attorneys with experience in trying murder and serious felony cases in front of juries, and who have been certified by the Illinois Supreme Court as the only attorneys eligible to try death penalty cases in the state.

Mr. Belz received his B.A. degree from the University of Illinois in 1987 and his *juris doctor* from St. Louis University College of Law in 1990. He began his legal career as an associate in general practice in Belleville, Illinois.

He first worked in the Sangamon County State's Attorney's office in from 1991 through 1994, and then was in private practice and a part-time public defender through 1999. He rejoined the Sangamon County State's Attorney's office that year and has been with that office ever since.

Mr. Belz lives in Springfield with his wife, Lisa, and their three children.

The screening committee consisted of 11 persons who reside in the Seventh Judicial Circuit, including six non-lawyers and five lawyers. Howard Peters of Springfield chaired the committee.

The Seventh Judicial Circuit includes Greene, Jersey, Morgan Macoupin, Sangamon and Scott counties.

Both judges will serve on the Circuit Court until the general election to be held in November 2006.